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Threat causes brief shutdown on Canadian side of St. Clair river

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BY JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Boat traffic in the industrial area of Sarnia on the Canadian side of the St. Clair river was shut down for a brief time Wednesday after the Canadian general information phone line received an anonymous, non-specific threat, U.S. Coast Guard officials said.

"The Detroit River was not closed," said Coast Guard Lt. Commander Brian Hall, discounting an Associated Press report that the river was closed to traffic due to a threat.

"I know that the Canadian officials limited passage through the industrial area off Sarnia for about an hour and 44 minutes," Hall said. "Canadian officials closed a portion of the industrial area in Sarnia, but they did not close the river down."

Danny Yen, Canada Customs communication manager in Windsor, said his office received "information of a security nature" Wednesday but would not say how what the anonymous caller said about the threat. Yen said Canada Customs shared the information with U.S. and Canadian authorities "so they could take whatever action they felt was necessary."

Yen said the threat was unsubstantiated but that customs officials continue to assess it.

U.S. Customs officials said Canadian officials told them that "there was a vessel containing a bomb" in Canadian waters, U.S. Customs

Sercive spokeswoman Cherise Miles said today.

She said her office and other federal agencies involved in border security assessed the information, ``but we didn't feel there was enough of a threat to shut down our operations" at Michigan's border crossings.

``We're already standing at alert level one, which means increased vigilance at the border," Miles said.

Hall said Canadian officials told his office that someone had made a phone call to the Canadian general information line - 411 - and made a non-specific threat against Canadian maritime interests.

``The report or call indicated that there was a threat to Canada in some fashion," Hall said.
``We still don't have all the verbiage but it was not necessarily Sarnia, the Great Lakes, the east coast or west coast. It was a non-specific threat."

``All vessel traffic on the river system, everything's open; there is no limitation whatsoever on any part of the Great Lakes system," Hall said.

Lt. Janice Butler, a police spokeswoman, said the Detroit Police department was never notified about any bomb threat or river closure.

The Ambassador Bridge and Detroit Windsor Tunnel remained open this afternoon, employees there said. An official for the tunnel said he had not been contacted by any government agency regarding any type of threat. In cases of terrorist threats, bridge and tunnel officials would be contacted by state, federal, local or provincial agencies, they said.

``We have received no official notification," said Neal Belitsky, director of operations for the Detroit and Canada Tunnel Corp., which runs the tunnel ``We're open. We've had no interruption in service, and the federal agencies we work with have had no interruption in service."

State Police Lt. Jerry Allaire said they have not been notified officially about any shutdown of the Detroit River or bomb threat.

``We're just checking on what we hear from the media," Allaire said.

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